

# SLEEP GUIDELINES

Arizona Department of Corrections  
Health Service Bureau

Inmate Wellness Program  
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In general, inmates average less than 6 hours of sleep a night. It is not unusual to sleep 2 or 3 hours a night. Medical staff do not prescribe medication for sleep, so it is important that you use other ways to get adequate rest.

Sleep problems can be due to a number of things, such as:

- Coming off drugs and alcohol. Drug related sleep problems often persist up to 90 days or more.
- Being in a new, high stress situation. This can cause occasional nightmares.
- Being in a less comfortable physical environment (different bed, food, roommate, conditions, etc.).
- Thinking about problems on the outside.

It may take as long as six months for your body and mind to adjust.

## Ways to Improve Your Sleep:

Use the "20 minute" rule. If you don't fall asleep within 20 minutes, get out of bed (if possible). Focus on something else until you feel sleepy. Then lie down.

- Avoid daytime naps completely.
- Avoid lying in bed when not sleeping, sit instead.
- Do physical exercise during the day, not in the evening or at night. Avoid caffeine after 12 noon. This can include some coffees, sodas, and teas, as well as chocolate.

- Avoid smoking cigarettes or chewing tobacco before going to bed.
- Try to find time during the day to sort out your problems.
- Try to develop bedtime rituals (i.e., brushing your teeth) that will serve as reminders that it is time for sleep.
- Use relaxation, breathing or meditation techniques.\*
- Drink less water or other fluids
- Stay away from negative conversations on the unit or the phone, or watching violence on TV before going to bed.
- Read a nonviolent book.

**Remember when your body needs to sleep for health reasons, you will fall asleep.**

*\*This information is on the Anxiety Commonsense Care Sheet available through the Inmate Information Sheet Binders in the library or from the health unit.*

*If you have tried the above instructions and your sleeplessness persists more than six months, or you need further instructions, contact your Counseling and Treatment Services Staff. Sleep hygiene groups are available.*

